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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the combined second to fourth periodic reports of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Addendum

Replies of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*

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1. Information on the measures taken to implement the Committee's previous recommendations and the recommendations issued by United Nations treaty bodies, on mechanism the DPRK envisages to put in place to strengthen dialogue with the Committee and technical cooperation with United Nations entities working on women's human rights, information on the role and mandate of national civil society organizations receiving public funding in relation to the law adopted in 2015

1. Following the consideration of the initial report on the Convention of Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (Convention), the National Committee for Implementing the International Human Rights Treaties (National Committee) disseminated documents containing the details of the process and concluding observations to the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, Cabinet, Education Commission, Ministry of Public Health, Central Bureau of Statistics and other ministry-level and law enforcement institutions concerned, people's committees and social organizations. It also called a plenary meeting to follow up on the recommendations contained therein and conducted review of the results and status of implementation thereof on a yearly basis.

2. The DPRK acceded to some of the international human rights treaties and took legislative measures to bring domestic laws in line with the conventions. They include the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (5 November, 2014), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (23 November, 2016), the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (19 June, 2013) and the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (16 June, 2016). The Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Women (the Law) and the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child were adopted on 22 December 2010, and the Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities was amended to incorporate the requirements of the Convention after signing it on 13 July 2013. Principles of non-discrimination are specified in these laws. (For legislative measures taken for the protection and promotion of the rights of women, see paras. 16, 17 and 28-37 of the Report.)

3. Intensive awareness-raising and dissemination campaigns were conducted about the international human rights treaties the DPRK acceded to and related domestic laws. Workshops were organized more than 10 times for capacity building of the officials of the people's committees and law enforcement institutions, as they are key players in implementing the conventions. As a result, people's committees have made it a rule to mainstream in their annual action plans the issues of promoting welfare of children, women and persons with disabilities and carry them out without fail. Public awareness-raising campaigns about the conventions were carried out in various forms. Mass media disseminated the conventions and the related domestic laws on several occasions such as the anniversary of the DPRK's accession to the conventions, world human rights day, Mothers' day, the anniversary of the proclamation of the Decree on Sexual Equality. Many publications were also produced for wide circulation such as the translated copies of the Compilation of International Human Rights Instruments, a booklet on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Compilation of Laws and Regulations concerning persons with disabilities, public health service, etc.

4. The DPRK have actively cooperated with United Nations entities working on women's human rights through the candid dialogues it had with the CEDAW Committee during the consideration of its initial report and regularly attending the sessions of the Committee on the Status of Women. The DPRK is going to further strengthen the existing system of cooperation with national institutions involved in

the implementation of the Convention and perfect the system of downward coordination to ensure that matters arising at the grassroots level in respect of the implementation of the Convention are timely grasped and relevant measures taken. The DPRK is considering strengthening dialogue with the Committee in various forms and receiving technical assistance to be proposed by women-related United Nations entities.

5. National civil society organizations receiving public funding are the Korean Federation for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, Korean Association for the Protection of the Elderly, the Red Cross Society, Korean Association for Supporting the Child and Korean Association for Family Planning and Maternal and Infant Health.

6. The mission of the Federation for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is to protect the rights and interests of persons with disabilities in all fields of social life and provide them with stable and favourable living conditions and environment in accordance with the relevant policy and laws of the State. It also conducts awareness-raising campaigns through media and publishing books and other materials, organizes diverse cultural and leisure activities, undertakes endeavours to provide facilities for the rehabilitation, education and cultural life of persons with disabilities and works with international organizations for the promotion of their well-being. It collects information on the implementation by institutions, enterprises, organizations and individuals of the law concerning persons with disabilities and makes recommendations to the government bodies concerned for necessary actions to be taken.

7. The Association for the Protection of the Elderly works to protect the rights and interests of old people in accordance with the relevant policy and laws of the State and conducts activities to ensure that they enjoy their remaining years in good health and happiness. It conducts activities to raise public awareness of the issue of protection of old people through media, works to ensure proper operation of nursing homes and other institutions for old people, and bases for their cultural and leisure activities and makes recommendations to the Cabinet and competent institutions for the settlement of matters arising in this regard.

8. The Red Cross Society is an independent health and relief organization based on voluntary commitment of citizens. It undertakes preparations against all kinds of disasters and works to rescue disaster victims, stabilize their living, remove the aftereffects of disasters and promote people's health and welfare, gives emergency medical service, disseminates health and hygienic knowledge to prevent communicable and other diseases and assists the State health institutions.

9. The mission of the Association for Supporting the Child is to contribute to the implementation of the policy of the State on bringing up all children healthy and happy through provision of improved services in the area of health care, nutrition, intellectual development and living. It gives priority to supporting orphans, children with disabilities and those in geographically-disadvantaged areas.

10. The role of the Association for Family Planning and Maternal and Infant Health is to contribute to the implementation of the policy of the State on public health through advocating the rights of everyone to reproduction and providing the disadvantaged with reproductive health-related information, education and communication. Its activities include the provision of reproduction-related medical care, dissemination of information about adolescent health management, anti-AIDS dissemination, awareness-raising about personal hygiene, training of medical workers, and development and implementation of various kinds of pilot projects.

Constitutional and legislative framework

2. Information on a comprehensive legislative and constitutional binding framework to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex in all areas covered by the Convention, and on the measures and policies undertaken to ensure formal and substantive equality between women and men

11. The Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly and the prosecutors' offices are empowered by articles 116 and 165 of the Socialist Constitution to supervise law observance. The Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly supervises in accordance with its annual program compliance by institutions, enterprises and organizations with laws and conducts nationwide education in law observance through legal departments in provincial people's committees. The prosecutors' offices, as a full-time supervisory machinery of law observance by institutions, enterprises, organizations and individuals, exercise supervision and regulation to ensure that the State laws are observed in a correct and unified manner. They conduct regular monitoring of the compliance by institutions, enterprises and organizations with the State laws, and the decisions and directives of State bodies and take measures to redress illegal acts identified.

12. According to the Education Law and Public Health Law, Education Commission, Ministry of Public Health, people's committees and the relevant supervisory and regulatory bodies monitor and control on a regular basis whether educational works are conducted or conditions of education are provided in accordance with the policy and laws of the State and whether people fully enjoy the benefits of State policy on public health.

13. Efforts were made to encourage women to take part in public life and increase the proportion of women working for governmental bodies by promoting able women with due qualifications to higher positions and enhancing the practical ability of serving women officials through systematic refresher courses. As a result, the proportion of women officials working for people's assemblies and people's committees at all levels, ministries and civil society organizations has increased. (For further information, see paras. 77, 79, 80, 81 and 232 of the Report.)

14. In accordance with the Cabinet directive to encourage participation of women in public life, the Ministry of Labour mandated the minimum proportion of women for each category of occupation and ensured that sufficient working conditions were created for women, with the result that a lot of housewives took jobs appropriate to their qualifications. (For further information, see paras. 43-45, 79-80 of the Report.)

3. Information on status of the Convention in relation to national legislation, on the minimum marriage age, on the reflection of the principle of equality of women and men in the Law on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and on measures taken to ensure women's access to information about their rights according to the law

15. At the time of its accession to the CEDAW in 2001, the DPRK considered the provisions of the Convention in relation to the relevant domestic laws and was convinced that the requirements of the Convention were generally consistent with its policy on gender equality. However, it made reservation on two articles, as they were in conflict with the relevant domestic laws, which were the minimum marriage for men and women and the rights of Koreans residing abroad to determine the nationality of their children. As no discrimination against women in this connection had been reported for the past 16 years, the DPRK decided to withdraw the reservation and made notification thereof to the United Nations in November 2015.

Para 18 of the Report, reading "When discrepancy arises between the Convention and domestic law, the one that is more favourable for the realization of women's rights takes precedence" is the general principle that the DPRK maintains in invoking international human rights treaties. Generally, if any discrepancy is found between a provision of the Convention and the relevant domestic law at the time of accession to the Convention, the provision concerned is reserved, necessary legislative measures are taken for harmonization and then the reservation is withdrawn. Therefore, it is very rare that discrepancies remain between the Convention and the domestic law. In very few cases, however, reservations may be retained due to failure to bring the given provision of the domestic law into line with the requirement of the Convention. Where questions arise as to which of the Convention and domestic law will be invoked concerning the provision in question, the one that is more favourable for the realization of women's rights will take precedence.

16. With regard to the minimum age for marriage, consultations were held several times with legal and other experts concerned. Most of them were of the view that article 9 of the Family Law, which sets the minimum marriage age for men at 18 and women at 17, is not in conflict with the principle of gender equality and requirements of the Convention, as it reflected the traditional customs, by which women usually married men older than them. The age for marriage specified in the Family Law is just the minimum age and in practice, most women in the country marry in their late twenties.

17. Significant progress has been achieved in the efforts for the protection of the rights of women since the adoption of the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Women on December 22, 2010. As a comprehensive law for women consisting of 7 chapters with 55 articles, this Law provides that it is the consistent policy of the DPRK to ensure gender equality and the State prohibits all forms of discrimination against women. It also provides that women have civil, political, economic and cultural rights, including the right to education, right to work, rights to marriage and family, and the right to person and property and that the principle of gender equality must be maintained in the exercise and enjoyment of these rights, as well as specifying the obligations of institutions, enterprises, organizations and individuals for the realization of women's rights.

18. As the title shows, this Law was adopted not just to protect women but to guarantee them their rights and to raise public awareness about the protection and promotion of their rights. With the adoption of this Law public awareness about the importance of the role of women in social progress and wellbeing of families and commitment to ensuring women their rights further enhanced, and it became legal obligation of all institutions, enterprises and organizations and individuals to protect and promote women's rights.

19. Seminars and workshops were organized to familiarize the general public with the requirements and contents of the Law. Special attention was directed to the dissemination of the Law at female-dominated institutions, enterprises and organizations so that women can be fully aware of and exercise their rights and do their share in the efforts for the wellbeing of the community. Dissemination of the Law was also included in the education program of law observance of all institutions, enterprises and organizations, which were required to review the situation of women at their respective units in the light of the Law and take appropriate redressing measures.

Definition of discrimination against women

4. Information on whether the definition of discrimination against women in the Law prohibits direct and indirect discrimination in the private and public spheres, on discrimination-related cases brought before the courts after the adoption of the Law and on awareness-raising activities targeting women in rural areas and groups of women in disadvantaged situations

20. It is stipulated in article 2 of the Law that "It is a consistent policy of the DPRK to ensure sexual equality. The State prohibits all forms of discrimination against women". In accordance with this Law, all forms of discrimination against women in civil and political, economic, social and cultural and other fields are strictly prohibited. With the concept of gender equality pervading the whole society, "discrimination on the basis of marital status", as referred to in article 2 of the Convention is unfamiliar to everyone. Women enjoy equal rights with men in all fields, working women are provided special protection and women with babies enjoy special benefits in accordance with the Socialist Constitution, Law on the Election of Deputies to People's Assemblies at All Levels, Law on the Protection and Promotion of Women's Rights, Law on Public Health, Law on Education, Socialist Labour Law, Law on Labour Protection and Law on Social Security.

21. There was no discrimination-related case brought before the court after the adoption of the Law.

22. For women in rural areas and disadvantaged situations references such as Health Information for Women, References for Women with Disabilities and the likes were published for distribution to rural and disadvantaged women, thus helping them acquire necessary information and knowledge. Information on various themes such as reproductive health and gynaecology was also imparted to women of this group through the enhanced role of household doctors at the primary health care level. Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey on Reproductive Health was carried out for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of the information, education and communication efforts, thereby narrowing down distinctions in women's awareness and helping adopt healthy lifestyle.

23. Distance learning system has been established across the country and sci-tech learning spaces built in co-op farms, enabling rural women to have access to national network and further improve their cultural standard. Farms without such facilities yet also provided latest information to rural women through regular learning sessions. Three more TV channels have been launched during the reporting period, thus providing rural women with access to broader scope of information.

Access to justice

5. Information about the provisions of the Law on the Compensation for Damages, specific to discrimination against women, and on how the amended Law on Complaints and Petitions and the Implementing Regulations ensure confidentiality of the process, make legal counsel available to women, allow for appeal and provide for adequate criminal sanctions when applicable

24. The Law on the Compensation for Damages adopted in 2005 consists of 5 chapters with 56 articles. The purpose of this Law is to establish strict system and order for making compensation for damages to property and harm to person, and thus protect the civil rights and interests of institutions, enterprises, organizations and citizens. Liability for damage to property covers only the one that can be calculated in terms of money, and damage that cannot be calculated in terms of

money is subject to determination by the court. Liability for harm to person covers harm to a person's health or life, as well as to mental harm caused by restricting a person's freedom or discrediting their dignity or honour. A person who suffered property damage or harm to his/her person must make a claim for compensation within the prescribed time limit. The time limit, however, does not apply in case of severe property damage or harm to person. The person under obligation to make compensation must fulfil his/her obligation in time and, if this is not possible, as soon as he/she becomes able to do so. The claimer can make a claim again with the court when he/she learns that the person concerned is capable of fulfilling his/her obligations.

25. Issues of ensuring confidentiality in the handling of complaints and petitions are covered by articles 6, 19 and 37 of the Law on Complaints and Petitions and article 39 of the Implementing Regulations. Ombudspersons are required not to disclose secrets that came to their knowledge in the course of inquiries. They are also required not to disclose to outsiders the names of complainants and the contents of complaints. They must hold in strict confidence personal secrets of the complainants and the person against whom the complaint was lodged. In case a complainant requests that investigation be conducted without interviewing him/her, such requests are granted.

26. Where the complainant so wishes, his/her name, occupation and place of residence may be exempt from registration. Where the complainant is aggrieved at the result of settlement of the complaint, he/she may lodge complaints again with ombudsperson senior in rank to the former. Officers who have an interest in the complaints or petitions concerned are not allowed to conduct investigations or inquiries.

27. Officials of institutions, enterprises and organizations and individuals who violate the rights and interests of citizens by breaking regulations concerned are subjected, depending on the gravity of the offence, to administrative or criminal punishment. In accordance with article 239 of the Criminal Law an official who overrides or wrongly settles a complaint or petition from a citizen and thus causes a serious consequence is subjected to criminal punishment.

28. (For information on complaints machinery, see para. 25 of the Report.)

International framework and national machinery

6. Information on the composition of the National Committee and on the status of implementation of the National Committee's recommendations since April 2015

29. The National Committee is composed of officials from the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, the Cabinet, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Education Commission, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labour, Central Bureau of Statistics, Central Prosecutors' Office, Central Court, Ministry of People's Security, people's committees, youth league, women's union and other civil society organizations. The chairperson of the National Committee is the director general of the legislation department of the Presidium of the SPA and vice chairpersons are the deputy leaders of the Education Commission, Ministries of Public Health and Labour and the Central Court. The members include the heads of relevant departments and six to seven experts of the aforementioned agencies. Women make up 27.3 per cent. The secretariat is run by the Human Rights Division of the International Organizations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the secretary is the ambassador for human rights. (For information on the mission of the National Committee, see para. 19 of the Report.)

30. The National Committee made several recommendations to the Presidium of the SPA, the Cabinet, the KFPD and other institutions concerned between 2014 and 2016, which include the recommendation to the KFPD for organizing workshop and seminar for stakeholders in the run-up to the ratification of the CRPD, recommendation to the Cabinet for revising the Regulation for the School Support for the purpose of designating school supporter organization more efficiently in consideration of mission and size of universities and schools, recommendation to the Presidium of the SPA for the organizing workshops about the amended Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities to enhance the capacity of officials in people's committees and law enforcement organs. The recommendations were successfully followed up, with the result that the CRPD was ratified in November 2016, the Regulations for School Support revised in 2015 to the effect that one more institution or enterprise should be placed in charge of a teacher-training college or university regardless of the regions or types and seminars and workshops about the Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities and relevant domestic laws were organized in 2014.

7. Information about the mandate of the bodies empowered to monitor the implementation of the Convention and on how effective leadership and appropriate coordination is ensured

31. For mandate of supervisory institutions or departments, see paras. 11 and 12 of the present Replies.

32. Coordination of the implementation of the Convention is undertaken by the National Committee within the administrative guidance system from the central authority down to province (or municipality directly under the central authority), town (or district) and county. The National Committee convenes once a year for a regular meeting and several times a year for special meetings and conducts necessary visits to obtain first-hand information. Regular meetings review the yearly work of the National Committee and make recommendations to the Presidium of the SPA, the Cabinet and other institutions concerned. Special meetings are held to discuss pending issues and give members assignments for their implementation, who, in turn, communicate to the provincial committees concerned the tasks at hand and discuss ways to carry them out. As was stated in paras. 22 and 38 of the Report, it is the people's committees at all levels that are directly involved in the implementation and monitoring of the human rights policy of the State and the follow-up measures. Members of the National Committee have the obligation to ensure that the issue of protection and promotion of rights and welfare of women, children, persons with disabilities and old people are integrated into the work of their respective units and thoroughly implemented.

8. Information on the adoption and implementation of the national comprehensive and coordinated plan of action to promote gender equality and on putting in place a comprehensive system of data collection

33. The Law provides that people's committees at all levels and all other institutions, enterprise and organizations shall mainstream the issue of protection of women's rights into their work and take measures for their implementation. To fulfil this obligation, they include the issue of protection of women's rights in their yearly program of action and pay special attention to their implementation. According to the Table for Proportion of Male and Female Workers by Occupation formulated by the Ministry of Labour every institution, enterprise and organization is trying to ensure proportion of women in their respective units, protect women at work and create favourable working conditions for them. (For further information in this regard, see paras. 77-82, 88, 89, 109, 114, 130, 231 and 232 of the Report.)

34. For the purpose of collecting data and developing indicators in respect of women a new system has been established under which an official in the Central Statistics Bureau who doubles as a member of the National Committee was appointed to be responsible, on a full time basis, for the collection of women-related data from statistics departments of provinces, towns and counties. The Central Bureau of Statistics, in cooperation with the National Committee, developed necessary indicators to assess the situation of women and formulated guidelines to be forwarded to the institutions concerned. For instance, during the Population Census in 2008 several indicators were newly developed to assess the situation of women. Further data will be collected at the census scheduled in 2018.

35. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, as of 2017, women account for 52.5 per cent and 47.8 per cent, respectively, of the total population and workforce. Of all the deputies to the Supreme People's Assembly and local people's assemblies women make up 20.2 per cent and 27 per cent respectively. Literacy rate of women above 10 years of age is 99.9 per cent. Women account for 43.8 per cent of people above 16 years of age who received tertiary education. Married women account for 19 per cent of women in the age group of 20 to 24 and 80 per cent of those in the age group of 25-29. Average life expectancy of women is 75.6, mortality (per 1,000) 7.8 and maternal mortality (per 100 000 live births) is 58. (For further information in this regard, see paras. 99-104, 114 and 186 of the Report.)

Temporary special measures

9. Information on the measures taken to promote parity, on women's participation in people's committees disaggregated by level, on timeframe for temporary special measures and on efforts to eliminate prevailing perceptions of women's physical attributes and characteristics

36. For measures taken to increase proportion of women in the people's committees, see para. 82 of the Report. In 2008 and 2015 the proportion of women officers at the people's committees was 19.5 per cent and 23.3 per cent respectively and women directors 16.2 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.

37. A Table for Proportion of Male and Female Workers by Occupation was formulated in 2009, pursuant to the directive of the Cabinet to further encourage women's participation in public life. The purpose was to ensure labour balance in economic sectors by efficiently utilizing human resources, and to encourage women to take an active part in public life and thus contribute to the wellbeing of the community and family by setting standards for assigning right jobs to right women in consideration of their wish, age, ability and physical attributes and characteristics. A sample survey conducted jointly by the Ministry of Labour and the National Committee in 2015 showed that in several sectors the proportion of women was not yet up to the mark. To remedy the situation, further measures were taken to encourage women's participation in public life, which were awareness-raising about their role in society, provision of more favourable working conditions and facilities to free them from domestic chores. Next round of survey is expected in 2021.

38. Despite the well-established public attitudes towards gender equality, traditional view of distinction between "men's area" and "women's area" still persists. A number of measures, as mentioned in para. 83 of the Report, will be continued.

Stereotypes and gender-based violence against women

10. Information on the incidences, causes and consequences of violence against women, including domestic violence, on legal measures taken to criminalize violence against women and on the steps taken to raise awareness of domestic violence

39. The DPRK regards the consolidation of family as an important issue in promoting healthy development of society and building up a harmonious and united socialist family and has taken a series of legislative measures in this regard. It is stipulated in the Family Law that "Family is the basic unit of society. The State shall pay close attention to and concern for consolidating the family (article 3)". For the protection of women's right to person, the Law provides that "Women shall have inviolable rights to person. No one shall commit acts of restricting women's freedom, inflicting bodily injury on them in a violent or non-violent manner or searching their bodies without a legal warrant (article 37) " and "All forms of domestic violence shall be prohibited and local people's committees, institutions, enterprises and organizations shall include in their work program the education of residents and employees under their control in the prevention of domestic violence, thereby ensuring that acts of violence are not committed in their families (article 46)".

40. Domestic violence is not a social problem in the DPRK. There are, however, some families that tend to resolve in a violent manner conflicts or problems arising due to differences in lifestyle, management of domestic economy and child upbringing. Most of them, in the end, were resolved amicably with the help of advice and persuasion of neighbours, colleagues and relatives.

41. Awareness raising campaigns were actively carried out to prevent family disputes. Institutions, enterprises and organizations increased obedience to law by their employees through explaining relevant laws. The Central Court formulated education materials to the effect that domestic violence is not a private family matter but a crime that does harm to the harmony and unity of the society and serious violations of women's rights. A number of movies, novels and other cultural works of art portraying family life were released to produce positive role-models for people and a lot of cultural facilities provided for families to enjoy life in a diverse manner. (For further information in this regard, see paras. 61-65 of the Report.)

42. The crime of raping is punished in accordance with article 279 of Criminal Law, which provides that "A man who rapes a woman by using violence, threats or by taking advantage of her helpless situation shall be subjected to reform through labour of not more than five years. In case of a grave offense he shall be subjected to reform through labour of not less than five years but not more than ten years. In case of committing gang rape repeatedly or causing serious injury or loss of life on a victim, he shall be subjected to reform through labour of more than ten years".

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

11. Information on the measures taken to prevent trafficking and to provide the victims with adequate care and protection, and the number of people convicted of rape and other sexual offences

43. Human trafficking is inconceivable in the DPRK, where no social or systematic causes exist that may give rise to trafficking of persons. Some acts of trafficking were committed by those who were involved in anti-DPRK plots masterminded by hostile forces. During the reporting period, a number of crimes against humanity and human rights were committed by the south Korean authorities,

targeting our women for abduction, forcible detention and "defection" in their desperate moves to realize the confrontational policy against the fellow countrymen. For instance, Kim Ryon Hui, abducted by traffickers in September 2011 to south Korea is not yet allowed to return home and twelve girls abducted in April 2016 to south Korea while engaged in business abroad have been forcibly detained, with no one knowing about their fate and whereabouts.

44. The DPRK, having analysed the cause of the abduction and other organized crimes, took a series of measures for strengthening international cooperation in combating crimes. It concluded with China the Treaty on Legal Assistance in Civil and Criminal Matters on 19 November 2003, with Russia the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and Treaty on Extradition of Criminals on 17 November 2015 and with several other countries treaties on mutual legal assistance. It acceded to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime on 16 June 2016. On this basis the Ministry of People's Security and other competent institutions concluded agreements on mutual assistance with law enforcement organs in the neighbouring countries, thereby creating conditions to combat abduction and other crimes at the international level.

45. The returnee victims of abduction were looked after by the people's committee in the area concerned, providing them with necessary facilities for their stabilized living. Private matters of victims were kept in strict confidence, appropriate medical care was provided and other necessary measures taken to improve their living. For example, Pak Jong Suk, who had been abducted to south Korea in 2005 and then came back home in 2012, is now enjoying her life with her son's family in Pyongyang. Practical measures were also taken in border areas to foil the attempts of hostile forces to abduct our citizens.

46. Legal Fund was created and a bank opened under the Korean Bar Association with a view to providing financial assistance to women who had been trafficked abroad or filed suit against the perpetrators of abduction before the courts in foreign countries.

47. To prevent crimes is the principal requirement of the criminal policy of the DPRK. Regular education in law observance has fostered the atmosphere of respect for and compliance with the law and active fighting against crimes, resulting in low incidence of violations of law. People's security organs at different levels have built an information-sharing network, by which security units at the grassroots level can report to the central unit violations of law collected through the public reporting system and offence-tracing system, and share necessary information with each other.

48. In 2008, 2011 and 2015 the number of persons convicted of rape was 9, 7 and 5 respectively and of the crime of obliging a woman who is his subordinate to have sexual intercourse was 5, 6, and 3 respectively.

Participation in political and public life

12. Information on the percentage of women elected for the Supreme People's Assembly and the local people's assemblies, on the percentage of women in ministries and on measures envisaged to increase women's representation in the Foreign Service

49. In the election of deputies to the Supreme People's Assembly held in 2009 and 2014 women accounted for 15.6 per cent and 20.2 per cent respectively.

50. In the election of deputies to the local people's assemblies held in 2007, 2011 and 2015 women accounted for 24.5 per cent, 25.5 per cent and 27 per cent respectively.

51. In 2008 and 2015, women made up 19.2 per cent and 23 per cent of the officials of ministries and national institutions respectively and 14.5 per cent 16.1 per cent of division chiefs and above respectively.

52. (For the prescribed quota for women, see para. 44 of the Report.)

53. With a view to increasing women's representation in the foreign service, female graduates of the Kim Il Sung University, Pyongyang University of Foreign Studies, etc. who wish to be diplomats are interviewed and given one-year training course. Some of them are sent abroad for further language learning or to gain first-hand practical experience in the foreign country concerned. As more young women are now working as diplomats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs than before, total number of female diplomats is expected to increase. However, the implementation of the program to increase the proportion of female diplomats in the Ministry and abroad is facing grave challenges as the United States puts pressure, under the pretext of implementing the unjust "sanctions resolutions" of the Security Council, on other countries to suspend or lower the level of diplomatic relations with the DPRK and downsize the number of diplomats in the DPRK Missions abroad, with the result that some countries follow the request.

Education

13. Information on the courses that are not available to women, explanation on para. 109 of the Report and on the number of women entering university-level institutions

54. As was indicated in para. 96 of the Report, women in the DPRK have equal rights with men to education, including admission to the universities and colleges. Some specially designated courses, however, are not open to women or admit them in limited numbers, as they are unfit for women for reasons of their physical characteristics. They are, for instance, Faculty of Mining Engineering at the Universities of Technology, Faculties of Coal Mining and Extraction Engineering at the University of Coal Mining, Faculties of Navigation Science and Marine Machinery at the Universities of Fisheries and Faculty of Welding Technology at the University of Hydro-energy Industry.

55. The "60 per cent" indicated in para. 109 of the Report is the proportion of women among the 10,000 students attending the distance-learning course of the Kim Chaek University as of 2015 and the "23 per cent" is the proportion of women among the 113 first-term graduates of this course. Since 2009 when the Kim Chaek University, the hub of science and technology education, opened distance education college, the first of its kind in the country, all the universities have established the same and the number of women attending these courses is increasing year by year. In 2008 and 2015 the proportion of women admitted to universities were 28.1 per cent and 32.2 per cent respectively.

14. Information on "dolgyeokdae", on employment occupations and area that are classified as unfit for women and on "songbun"

56. A good system for the protection of women at work has been put in place in the DPRK. (For practical measures taken for the protection of women at work, see paras. 116-140 of the Report.)

57. Labour brigade is voluntary organization of housewives, who, mindful of their duties as citizens, wish to make a contribution to the good of community and the wellbeing of future generations. When projects of school renovation, park refurbishing or street greening are under way in the areas of their residence, housewives, in small or large groups, take part in them to give the workers helping

hand or provide them with material support. Such activities reflect an aspect of the mental preparedness of the DPRK citizens, who regard the interests of the community as their own and take pride in devoting themselves for the good of the community. For instance, when the northern part of the country was hit by unprecedented heavy floods in September 2016, the whole country turned out to build 11,900 dwelling houses for the displaced in a matter of 4 months. At that time, women in the area including housewives took an active part in the reconstruction efforts. During the construction of Ryomyong Street in Pyongyang in 2016-2017, a lot of housewives including those who were temporarily evacuated from their old homes actively took part in the construction. There will be more and more of such voluntary activities, as the State continues to enforce policies for the welfare of people under the politics of love for people and children.

58. Occupations and areas that are unfit for women are specified in the Law on Labour Protection and its implementing regulations. They include, for instance, harmful labour dealing with toxic materials and radioactive substances, work done at a place with a temperature of over 30°C and relative humidity of over 80 per cent, in extreme noise or vibration and underground work including coal or mineral mining. It is not allowed to put pregnant women or women with children under school age on night shifts. It is also required by law to keep female farmers from direct contact with insecticides and herbicides.

59. Job placement of women are conducted in strict accordance with the relevant regulations, with due consideration given to their wishes, expertise and ability. The DPRK, having set an ambitious goal of building a thriving socialist nation, is directing special attention to encouraging every sector and every unit to treasure talents and make efforts to enhance practical ability of their employees, as well as to selecting leading officials from among those who are capable and enjoy confidence and popularity among people. Therefore, the general principle in assigning women jobs is to give primary consideration to their ability.

60. There is no such thing as social classification. It is a preposterous invention fabricated by the hostile forces in their desperate moves to slander and damage the prestige of the DPRK.

15. Information on measures taken to ensure women have equal opportunities to access positions of responsibility in the management of markets and on existing mechanisms of to safely lodge complaints and on the right of married women to have the same professional opportunities on an equal basis as men

61. Set up for the convenience of people, markets are managed in accordance with the relevant regulations under the guidance of the Ministry of Commerce and the people's committee concerned. As markets are some kind of businesses, those in managerial positions are required to possess necessary qualifications in such areas as business operation, accounting, commerce, etc., as well as some years of service in certain public areas. Any woman satisfying such requirements is eligible to be management staff.

62. A mechanism of complaints and petition is also established in the markets. Dealers here have the rights to file complaints or petitions concerning the rules of operation of market, manners of the managerial staff, etc. with the management office or the people's committee concerned. The complaints and petitions so filed are considered and settled in accordance with the procedures provided in the Law on Complaints and Petitions.

63. It is prohibited by the law to practice discrimination against married women in job placement. The rights of married women to work is guaranteed by the Law on

Socialist Labour, Law on Labour Protection, Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Women and the Regulations on Job Placement.

Health

16. Information on maternal mortality, on main achievements of the eight strategic areas of the Reproductive Health Strategy (2011-2015), about the availability of and access to general, sexual and reproductive health for all women in all parts of the country and on measures taken targeting men and boys on sexual and reproductive health

64. In 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2015 maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births) was 85.1, 76, 68.1 and 58 respectively.

65. The eight strategic areas of the Reproductive Health Strategy (2011-2015) include safe maternal and neonatal care, quality family planning service, prevention, detection and management of reproductive tract infection/sexually transmitted infection and HIV, safe abortion, treatment of infertility, early detection and treatment of cervical cancer and breast cancer, treatment of menopausal disorder and adolescent health. The Strategy was successfully implemented with the result that the quality of education in the area of maternal and neonatal care improved through the introduction of newly developed guidelines on emergency obstetrics and neonatal care into the in-service training curricular for medical workers; quality of delivery service enhanced through modernizing delivery and surgery rooms of people's hospitals in towns and counties; the strategic goal to reduce the unmet needs for modern contraception methods has been attained, reducing the rate to 4.6 per cent and increasing the rate of users of modern contraceptive method to 78.2 per cent, with 98 per cent of contraception carried out with the help of uterine ring; obstetricians' skills of managing abortion improved and maternal deaths caused by complications of pregnancy like abortion significantly reduced as a result of intensive MVA clinical training for medical workers; National Action Plan for Cervical Cancer Control was formulated and pilot introduction was carried out in two provinces.(For adolescent health care, see paras. 207-209 of the Report.)

66. All women in all parts of the country are receiving equal medical care with men plus special care appropriate to their physiological characteristics. General medical care institutions are put in place at all levels from the centre down to province, town, county and dong(ri). In addition to these a comprehensive system for women's health care has been established centring on the women's health care section in the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital and including ob/gyn sections of provincial and county people's hospitals, and dong polyclinics and ri hospitals and obstetricians/midwives of clinics, providing women full access to general health care and sexual and reproductive care as well. (For number of health institutions and facilities, see para. 150 of the Report.)

67. Various campaigns were conducted to encourage men to play a better role and participate actively in promoting the reproductive health. (See para. 209 of the Report.)

Rural women

17. Information on the percentage of women occupying leading positions in farms and agriculture-related institutions and enterprises and on proportion of rural households with access to safe drinking water and sanitation

68. In 2008 and 2015 the proportion of female farm managers was 16.3 per cent and 18 per cent respectively and of women holding leading positions in agriculture-related enterprises and institutions 17.2 per cent and 19.1 per cent respectively.

69. All of the managerial staff of markets are women.

70. According to the survey conducted in 2008 the proportion of urban and rural households using water supply through household connection was 96 per cent and 77 per cent respectively, the population using improved drinking water sources 100 per cent and 99.9 per cent respectively and those using improved sanitation 92 per cent and 83 per cent respectively.

Disadvantaged groups of women

18. Information on the measures taken to assist women returnees who went abroad without valid permits to reintegrate into their families and society, on the number of these women and the proportion of those who were criminally sanctioned and/or assigned to re-education programmes and on the number of women in detention, and on mechanisms to receive complaints from women inmates

71. For measures taken for women returnees who went abroad without valid travel permits, see para. 42 of the present Replies.

72. Between 2005 and 2016, there were a total of 6,473 women who returned after travelling abroad without valid travel permits. It was found upon their return that the majority of them illegally crossed the border because of economic difficulties they were suffering at that time or as victims of plots of human trafficking groups. Therefore, they were not subjected to any legal punishment and are now enjoying stabilized life thanks to the all-embracing, benevolent politics of the State. What should be noted in this regard is the persistent abduction moves perpetrated by the U.S. and other hostile forces pouring huge amount of funds into "religious organizations" and NGOs to serve their anti-DPRK human rights campaigns. A case in point is the group abduction of girls in China last year.

73. There were 109 women who served sentences between 2005 and 2016, of whom 76 were sentenced to punishment for such crimes as embezzling or destroying State property and cheating of personal property whereas 33 were sentenced to punishment for involvement in such grave crimes as drug trafficking and attempted murder while staying abroad without valid travel permits.

74. Complaints and petitions machinery is put in place in reform institutions. Reform institutions are required to receive complaints and petitions filed by inmates, their families, relatives or guardians in good time, settle them in a fair manner and inform the complainants of the results. Where the complaints and petitions received are not of the category that the reform institutions should deal with, they are transmitted to the institutions concerned. The institutions to which the complaints were referred are obligated to inform the former of the results of settlement. It is prohibited by law to override the complaints and petitions from inmates or delay the settlement without valid reasons.

19. Information concerning "human rights' international investigations"

75. The information gathered by "human rights' international investigations", referred to in the question is the information contained in the report of "CoI", whose mandate the DPRK has never accepted or acknowledged. Moreover, the "information" is based on false testimonies made by the criminal "defectors" who fled the country leaving their loved ones after committing grave crimes, in accordance with the scenario plotted by the hostile forces, and to make money. To quote such information is an affront to the socialist system of the DPRK and its people. As we have already clarified dozens of times, there is no such thing as political prison camps in the DPRK.

20. Information about the existing regulations concerning the methods of search, and on the existing regulations concerning the treatment of pregnant detainees and prisoners

76. All legal proceedings are carried out in full compliance with the law. In accordance with articles 34 and 171 of the Criminal Procedures Law the process of investigations and preliminary examinations is tape-recorded or video-taped, interrogation of the examinee is conducted with the attendance of a clerk and if need be, two observers, thus preventing investigators and preliminary examiners from committing abuse of power or violations of human rights. Prosecutors exercise strict supervision of detention rooms and reform institutions to ensure that no human rights violations are committed. In accordance with article 220 of the Criminal Procedures Law there should be two observers when conducting search of a certain place, and search woman should be attended by women. When there is no female law enforcement officer available, any woman who is believed to be trustworthy is requested to conduct search after being informed how to do it. In accordance with article 167 of the Criminal Procedures Law a preliminary examiner is not allowed to force the examinee to admit an offence or lead a statement. In accordance with article 242 of the Criminal Law a law officer who illegally interrogates an individual or fabricates or exaggerates a case is committed to criminal sanctions. Under article 176 of the Criminal Procedures Law a pregnant woman under preliminary examination is not detained or confined during three-month period before the expected childbirth and a seven-month period after childbirth.

21. Information concerning accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the acceptance of the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

77. Several rounds of consultations were held with the institutions related to women's rights and those involved in the implementation of the Convention concerning the issue of accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the acceptance of the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention, but no agreement has been reached as yet.